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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/069,578

02/27/2002

Takeshi Shibuya

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EXAMINER

NAGPAUL, JYOTI

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1743

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

09/04/2007

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.	Applicant(s)	
10/069,578	SHIBUYA ET AL.	
Examiner	Art Unit	
Jyoti Nagpaul	1743	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 July 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 16-25 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 16-25 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Amendment filed on May 15, 2007 has been acknowledged. Claims 16-25 are pending.

Response to Amendment

Rejection of Claims 16-18 and 21-25 as being anticipated by Takahashi (US 6290907) has been modified in light of applicant's amendments.

Rejection of Claims 19-20 as being unpatentable over Takahashi in view of Hanaway (US 4719087) has been modified in light of applicant's amendments.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

2. Claims 16-18 and 21-25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Takahashi (US 6290907).

Takahashi teaches an automatic analyzer comprising a rack standby disk (301) capable of rotating and stopping in a state that a plurality of racks (10) holding specimens are made to standby thereon. A rack feed line (1a) for transferring the racks (10) from a rack supply section (2a) to the rack standby disk (301). The analyzer further comprising a rack recovery line (1b) for transferring the racks (10) on the rack standby

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disk (301) towards a rack recovery station (14) and a rack transfer means (1) operating to transfer the racks (10) from the rack standby disk (301) to a specimen sampling position (5) on an analysis unit and to return the racks (10), from which the specimens have been sampled in the specimen sampling position (5), to the rack standby disk (301). The analyzer further comprising a control unit (17) controlling transfer of the racks (10) such that when a specific rack, which holds a specific liquid to repeatedly sampled as necessary, is standing by on the rack standby disk (301), the specific rack is kept standing by on the rack standby disk until a subsequent time of measurement with the specific rack. (See Figures 1-6) Takahashi further teaches the rack standby disk (301) is disposed in a rack delivery unit (3). Takahashi further teaches wherein a position (1e) for receipt of a pretreatment rack from which a specimen is to be sample and a position (1e) for carrying-out of an aftertreatment rack from which a specimen has been sampled are used in common. (See Figure 1) Takahashi further teaches a control unit (17) controlling transfer of the racks in a manner that after a preceding rack is returned to the rack standby disk (301) from the specimen sampling position (5), a subsequent rack is transferred via the track transfer means (1). (See Figure 1)

Additionally, with respect to Claim 18, applicant recites "wherein **a position** of the rack standby disk for receipt of a pretreatment rack from the rack feed line which a specimen is to be sampled and **a position** of the rack standby disk for carrying-out of an aftertreatment rack from which a specimen has been sampled are used in common."

Positioning the rack standby disk is clearly functional recitations. The language does not constitute a limitation in any patentable sense in apparatus claims. The apparatus

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of Takahashi is clearly capable of positioning the standby disk. Additionally, a pretreatment rack and an aftertreatment rack are not positively recited. Takahashi further teaches the control unit (17) controls transfer of the racks (10) in a manner that when an emergency rack holding a specimen which needs urgent measurement, is received by the rack standby disk (301), a rack (10), for which sampling and treatment of a specimen is being performed in the analysis unit, is suspended in the treatment and temporarily returned onto the rack standby disk (301) and returned to the rack standby disk (301) after the sampling and treatment of the specimen, and then the suspended rack is transferred to the specimen sampling position (5) on the analysis unit from the rack standby disk (301) so that the sampling and treatment of the specimen are resumed for the suspended rack. (See Figure 1) (Col. 5, Lines 21-56) Additionally, with respect to Claim 21, applicant recites "wherein said control unit **controls** transfer of an emergency rack as one of the racks holding a specimen, **which** needs urgent measurement, said emergency rack being **received** by said rack standby disk, and when said rack standby disk **holds** the emergency rack, another one of the racks for which sampling and treatment of a specimen is **being performed** in said analysis unit, is **suspended and temporarily returned** onto the rack standby disk, wherein the emergency rack is **transferred** to the specimen sampling position of the analysis unit from the rack standby disk **after** the sampling and treatment of the specimen and wherein the **suspended** rack is then **transferred** to the specimen sampling position on the analysis unit from the rack standby disk **so that** the sampling and treatment for the specimen are **resumed** for the suspended rack." The above recitation is clearly a

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functional limitation. The language does not constitute a limitation in any patentable sense in apparatus claims. The control unit of Takahashi is clearly capable of performing the claimed function:

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

5. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

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6. **Claims 19-20** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi in view of Hanaway (US 4719087).

Takahashi fails to teach the rack standby disk is disposed in an evaporating protecting chamber, in which air is maintained higher in humidity than an outside air.

Hanaway teaches a specimen tray assembly for use in an automatic analyzer. The assembly comprising of an evaporation protecting chamber (See Figures 2, 4 and 5).

It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify the device of Takahashi such that the rack standby disk is disposed in an evaporating protecting chamber as suggested by Hanaway to achieve the predictable results of reducing evaporation and there is no undue evaporation of the contents of the cuvettes. (See Col. 7, Lines 28-31)

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed on May 14, 2007 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicants argue that Applicants argue that the claimed "rack standby disk" is not equivalent to the centrifuge or rack standby disk as asserted by the Examiner in the Takahashi reference. It is the Examiner's position that the applicants merely claim "a rack standby disk capable of rotating and stopping in a state that a plurality of racks holding specimen are made to standby" and that the centrifuge/rack standby disk in Takahashi is clearly equivalent to applicants claimed rack standby disk. The centrifuge or "rack standby disk" of Takahashi is capable of rotating and stopping in a state that a plurality of racks holding specimen are made to standby. Applicants

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further argue that Takahashi does not disclose the rack standby disk is disposed in a rack delivery unit. It is the Examiners position that the centrifuge unit of Takahashi is equivalent to the claimed rack delivery unit. Examiner notes it is the claims that define the invention and not the applicant's specification.


Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jyoti Nagpaul whose telephone number is 571-272-1273. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday thru Friday (8:00-4:30).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jill Warden can be reached on 571-272-1267. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

JN


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